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ABSTRACT

This guide is designed to help South Carolina's school administrators implement the school improvement process mandated by the state legislature. The first chapter introduces the educational philosophy produced by the research on effective schools. Six indicators of effective schools (positive school climate, instructional leadership of the principal, emphasis on academics and basic skills, high expectations related to student achievement, frequent monitoring of student progress, and positive home/school relations) are defined and recent legislation affecting school improvement efforts is described. The second chapter discusses school improvement councils and their role in the school improvement process. Chapters 3, 4, and 5 review the essentials of the process itself. Chapter 3 covers needs assessment, suggesting instruments, audiences, and methods of interpretation. Chapter 4 explains the use of the assessment data in developing long- and short-range objectives. Chapter 5 focuses on the implementation of the school improvement plan, emphasizing monitoring, adjusting, and collecting evidence of the attainment of goals. Preparation of an annual school summary report is also covered. The sixth chapter briefly describes the relationship among the school improvement process, the district improvement report, and the district staff development report. The guide culminates with appendices that include a relevant citation from South Carolina's Education Improvement Act of 1984, the regulations governing school improvement councils and annual school and district reports, a timetable for submitting reports, and instructions for preparing reports. (PGD)

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AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE FOR THE LEGISLATIVE MANDATED SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

1986

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

CHARLIE G. WILLIAMS
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION

EA 019 178

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AN IMPLEMENTATION GUIDE

FOR THE LEGISLATIVE MANDATED

SOUTH CAROLINA SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PROCESS

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1986

SOUTH CAROLINA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

		Page
Preface		iv
Introduction		v
Chapter 1	Presenting the Research and Legislative Base	1
Chapter 2	Establishing A School Improvement Council	6
Chapter 3	Conducting the Needs Assessment	9
Chapter 4	Developing the School Improvement Plan	13
Chapter 5	Implementing the School Improvement Plan	18
Chapter 6	Reviewing District Requirements	21
Appendix A	The Law Related to School Improvement	23
Appendix B	State Board of Education Implementation Regulations for School Improvement Legislation	27
Appendix C	Calendar of Activities and Events	30
Appendix D	State Department of Education Instructions for the Preparation of the Annual School Improvement Report, School Summary Report, Annual District Improvement Report, and Annual District Staff Development Report	31

PREFACE

The purpose of this guide is to assist principals and district-level administrators in the implementation of the legislative mandated South Carolina School Improvement Process.

The first chapter is an introduction to the educational philosophy produced by the research on effective schools. Definitions of the six indicators of effective schools selected by the South Carolina Department of Education for use in South Carolina are included along with the legislative mandates of the past decade which have impacted school improvement initiatives.

The second chapter discusses the establishment of the school improvement council and its role in the school improvement process. Practical suggestions are included.

Chapters Three, Four, and Five discuss the essentials of the mandated improvement process. In Chapter Three there is a description of a needs assessment process along with the suggested instruments, audiences, and methods of interpretation. Chapter Four discusses the use of needs assessment data in developing both long-range and short-range objectives. A practical method for designing strategies is suggested. Chapter Five focuses on the implementation of the school improvement plan with emphasis on monitoring, adjusting, and collecting evidence of attainment of goals. The preparation of the annual school summary report is also discussed.

The sixth chapter briefly describes the relationship between the school improvement process, the district improvement report, and the district staff development report.

The guide culminates with appendices which include a relevant citation from the Education Improvement Act of 1984, the regulations governing school improvement councils and the annual school and district reports (revised October 1985), a timetable for submitting all required reports, and instructions for preparing required reports.

Special thanks are extended to the following writers, editors, and typists of this document: Jerry Corley, Chief Supervisor; Doug Keel, Program Supervisor; Diane Harwell, Program Supervisor; Barbara Gottesman, Program Supervisor; John Tudor, former Chief Supervisor; John Segars; Jeannie Kuretsch; and Pat Seel.

INTRODUCTION

South Carolina schools and districts began a formal planning process in 1977 when the Education Finance Act mandated an annual school report, an annual district report, and the creation of the school advisory council. The nation-wide research on effective schools and the South Carolina Education Improvement Act of 1984 substantiate the importance of and the urgency for planning for educational improvement. If effective schools and districts are anticipated state-wide, change through planning must occur.

The principal as change agent for the school can create a belief by the faculty that all children can learn and can produce a school where the environment is safe and orderly, learning is a top priority with achievement levels accelerating, and the relationship with parents and the community is positive. The leadership of the principal in providing a healthy climate for change and in developing a cadre of school-level agents for change is vital to reaching effectiveness and striving for excellence. The superintendent, in turn, is the educational leader for the district and must foster change for the district as a whole as well as support efforts toward improvement at each school. The process set forth in ***An Implementation Guide for the Legislative Mandated South Carolina School Improvement Process*** should provide a foundation for this effort. I encourage principals and district administrators to use this guide and the services of the Office of Leadership and School Improvement in planning for school change.

Charlie G. Williams
State Superintendent of Education

CHAPTER 1
PRESENTING THE RESEARCH AND LEGISLATIVE BASE

"If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament." Such criticisms from *A Nation at Risk*, published in 1983, prompted many states including South Carolina (Education Improvement Act of 1984) to enact educational reform legislation. A significant theme in the reform legislation is the reference to effective schools and classrooms and the impact of the research that has helped to define school effectiveness.

Research-Based New Direction

Prior to 1970, a dominant philosophy in education was based on the findings of the **Coleman Report** supported by the studies of Jencks and others. Coleman concluded that the academic performance of children was influenced primarily by family background and environment and that if the family background and environment were negative toward education, then the best efforts of the school would be ineffective in bringing about change. In other words, the school could make little or no difference in the educational growth of a child if that child came from a poor, minority, or disruptive environment. Consequently, educators expected less from these students, and student achievement reflected the educators' low expectation.

One of the first educators to question the results of the **Coleman Report** and the resulting philosophy was George Weber. He had noted that there were many schools located in poor environments which served children from low socio-economic backgrounds where the students were achieving at or above national averages on standardized tests. It was true that most schools in similar environments exhibited very low test scores, but Weber questioned why some of these schools could be successful when the research indicated otherwise. His study of four of these successful schools utilized an observation-based, discovery-oriented technique that placed heavy emphasis on outcomes. This type of research begins with a positive situation and then proceeds to study carefully the practices that seem to be associated with the positive outcomes. His research team, recording its observations at the successful schools and then comparing them to observations made at less successful schools, found that the four successful schools all shared common characteristics not present in the other schools. The successful schools had strong instructional leadership, high expectations for student achievement, an orderly climate, and a strong emphasis on reading. Subsequent studies by Brookover, Levine, Stark, Edmonds, Lezotte, Rutter, and others found that successful schools, or effective schools, prepared all children to master at least the basic skills necessary for them to succeed at the next grade level. The message that the effective schools literature brings is that "schools can and do make a difference" in the educational success of all children. The effective schools researchers acknowledge that family background contributes to student achievement levels, but they disagree that family background determines a child's capacity to learn. The capacity to learn is determined by the school's utilization of its resources and its philosophy, especially the belief that all children can at least obtain a minimum mastery of the basic skills. Specifically, Ron Edmonds states that a school is considered effective when an equal percentage of students in the lowest and the highest quartile show mastery of basic skills.

Effective Schools Indicators

The researchers are in general agreement as to the indicators of an effective school. However, the number of indicators varies according to the research design or the grouping or

divisions of the indicators. The six indicators of school effectiveness adopted by the South Carolina State Board of Education for South Carolina's School Improvement Plan are consistent with the research of effective schools and represent a summary of the indicators by the major researchers in the field. The research has been consistent in the findings that the indicators cannot be prioritized nor addressed independently. For a school to be effective, all indicators must be present and functioning at an acceptable level so that an outside observer could validate their existence. The indicators of effective schools in South Carolina are defined in the following section. The indicators are not presented in a priority or hierarchical order.

I. Positive School Climate

In an effective school, the climate is orderly, purposeful, and free from the threat of physical harm. The atmosphere is conducive to teaching and learning; and faculty, students, and parents feel good about the school. Activities and procedures which support a positive school climate include:

1. the school staff and students communicate a feeling of pride when they talk about their school;
2. student work is displayed throughout the school;
3. school spirit is promoted and displayed through a variety of activities;
4. the building is clean and well maintained;
5. a school-wide disciplinary code is enforced with consistency and fairness by all staff members;
6. parents and students are well informed of the disciplinary code and the consequences for misbehavior; and
7. the total staff accepts the responsibility of maintaining discipline both in and out of class.

II. Instructional Leadership of the Principal

The principal and his administrative staff demonstrate strong leadership, especially in the areas of curriculum and instruction. The principal communicates the goals of the school to staff, parents, and students and sets the instructional expectations for the school. The effective principal identifies and utilizes the skills of the staff to improve the instructional program. Some of the leadership functions of the effective principal include:

1. regularly observing teachers and providing feedback and assistance;
2. coordinating the curriculum and ensuring that there is congruence among school, district, and state curriculum objectives, materials, assessment techniques, and classroom instruction;
3. frequently holding both formal and informal meetings concerning student achievement and the instructional program;
4. reviewing lesson plans and discussing instructional strategies with the teachers;
5. analyzing test data, interpreting the data to staff and parents, and using the data to modify the instructional program;
6. providing a well-planned staff development program which meets the identified needs of the staff;
7. ensuring that the staff and the parents know the goals of the school and giving frequent reports relative to the school's progress;
8. protecting instructional time; and
9. monitoring articulation between feeder schools and among grade levels within the school to ensure that the instructional program is consistent with the school goals.

III. Emphasis on Academics with Particular Emphasis on the Basic Skills

In effective schools, all students are given maximum opportunities to learn. Teaching and learning are seen as the top priorities of the school, and this emphasis is communicated to the entire school community. All students are expected to master the basic skills, and learning time is protected through efficient and effective organizational techniques. Some of the activities that support this area of effectiveness are:

1. sufficient time is allocated for basic skills activities;
2. homework is used to extend the learning time and is promptly checked and returned;
3. students are actively engaged in learning with the teacher or with peers during all instructional periods;
4. all students have an equal opportunity to be called upon and to participate in classroom discussions;
5. teachers spend a substantial amount of classroom time in active, direct instruction and check for understanding of the skill or concept before the students practice on their own;
6. teachers are aware of and make appropriate use of different methods of teaching such as peer tutoring, team teaching, and flexible grouping;
7. the principal monitors the allocation and use of instructional time;
8. the curriculum ensures not only the mastery of basic skills but also the opportunity for students to develop higher order thinking skills (Bloom's Taxonomy);
9. academic activities are recognized within the school community as being important and receive the appropriate recognition; and
10. academic excellence is expected and promoted by the entire school staff.

IV. High Expectations Related to Student Achievement

The belief that all students can learn and high expectations for all students have consistently been identified as necessary elements in an effective school. High expectations are manifested in the following school practices.

1. Teachers hold the belief that all students can master the basic skills. They do not believe that a student's home background is the prime determinant of achievement.
2. Teachers monitor test data to make sure that all students are mastering basic skills.
3. Teachers use mastery learning concepts and reteach if necessary.
4. Parents are encouraged to set high expectations for their children's achievement and progress through school.
5. Parents are informed of a student's success through frequent contacts by the school.
6. Teachers communicate that all students are expected to learn as much as they are capable of learning.
7. All students are expected to complete assignments and work toward their own successes.

V. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress and Its Utilization in Curriculum Planning

In an effective school, student progress is assessed frequently. Teachers inform students and parents about student progress and modify their teaching, if necessary, as a result of analyzing test data. Care is taken to ensure that there is congruence among the curricula, the content that is actually being taught, and the tests that are used to measure student achievement. All test data are analyzed and utilized in curriculum planning to ensure that deficient areas are addressed. Activities associated with frequent monitoring include:

1. test results are used systematically to evaluate program objectives for instructional and curriculum planning, for refining the program of instruction, and for developing school goals;
2. test results are discussed with the entire staff and with individual teachers;
3. skill testing is given to determine mastery after each instructional unit, and students not mastering skills are retaught before new material is introduced;
4. students are given regular feedback about their progress;
5. parents are given regular feedback on student progress and are given suggestions for assisting their child;
6. test scores are interpreted for staff and parents on a regular basis;
7. the school staff is held accountable for test results;
8. a variety of assessment instruments are used to determine student achievement — criterion-referenced, norm-referenced, and teacher-made tests; and
9. testing is incorporated into the instructional program as a learning tool rather than a signal to end one unit before going to the next.

VI. Positive Home/School Relations

Positive home/school relations denote a cooperative feeling that exists between the school and its community. When the school and parents work together to promote and foster student

learning, the school will become more effective and student achievement will increase. Some of the ways that a school can foster positive relations include:

1. the school insures that parents have a clear understanding of the school's goals;
2. the school encourages parents to be active in the school through volunteer programs, booster clubs, school improvement councils, the Parent Teacher Association, and informal groups;
3. the school gives parents opportunities to design and participate in parent education programs;
4. the school encourages parents to visit their child's classroom;
5. the school utilizes various means to communicate with parents: telephone calls, handbooks, newsletter, school and class meetings, parent/teacher conferences, notes home, local press, and informal meetings;
6. the school gives parents suggestions for helping their children at home; and
7. the school community is encouraged to help the school reach its goals through such activities as adopt-a-school, educational foundations, exchange programs with local businesses, or direct financial support for special programs.

These six indicators of school effectiveness were adopted by the South Carolina State Board of Education as the indicators that all schools must examine as a part of the school improvement process in South Carolina. Also, the research indicates that effective schools have a clearly articulated mission with goals which focus on academic achievement and mastery of basic skills and which are communicated to all staff, students, and parents. The implementation of the school improvement process, which encompasses the development and implementation of the school improvement plan, should enable each school in South Carolina to develop a clear school mission and, therefore, to demonstrate this indicator of effectiveness.

Legislative Mandates for School Improvement in South Carolina

In 1977, the South Carolina General Assembly passed the South Carolina Education Finance Act (EFA) which drastically changed the system of state funding for the public schools. Included in this legislation was the mandate that each school district board of trustees create an advisory council at each school for the purpose of assisting in the preparation of an annual school report. The EFA stipulated the composition of the council as follows:

> *"at least two parents, elected by the parents of the children enrolled in the school; at least two teachers, elected by the faculty; at least two students in schools with grades 9 and above, elected by the students; other representatives of the community and persons selected by the principal; provided, however, that the elected members of the committee shall comprise at least a two-thirds majority of the membership of the committee."*

The intent of this legislation was to involve parents in an official capacity of providing input into determining the needs of the school along with establishing objectives and suggesting strategies to meet those needs. The annual school report was organized so that each pupil classification funded under the EFA was examined in terms of educational needs; goals were set, and strategies were developed to meet the needs of each pupil classification. The report was submitted to the local board of trustees at its first meeting in March, reviewed by the board, and returned to the school advisory council prior to the end of the school year. The school district was required further to develop an annual district report that utilized the objectives set by each local school. Each school developed a summary of its report and distributed the summary to each parent prior to September 30 of the following school year.

While the intent of the law was to actively involve parents in the improvement of their schools, involvement did not occur in many areas of the state. Unfortunately, many schools interpreted the process as merely a paper exercise. Once the report was completed in March, little more was done until the next fall when it became necessary to develop another report. The EFA did not

include any provisions for an implementation period nor for an evaluation of the effectiveness of the plan; therefore, few school districts truly benefited from the process.

In 1978, the General Assembly enacted the Basic Skills Assessment Program (BSAP) which provided that all students in grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 11 be tested for mastery of the basic skills in language arts, mathematics, and writing. State objectives were established, and tests were developed. The law stated that any student who failed to score at or above the state standard for each skill area had to be remediated until he was able to meet that standard. While this act was not specifically designed to relate to the research on effective schools, it is obvious that the emphasis on mastery of basic skills is supported by the research findings dealing with the emphasis on academics and the basic skills.

The Education Improvement Act of 1984 (EIA) has been recognized by the Rand Corporation as one of the most comprehensive education reform packages in the United States. Many of the reforms in the EIA make reference to the research of effective schools. Of particular importance to the school improvement process are the changes in the annual school report required by the EFA. The annual report became the school improvement report, and the school advisory council was renamed the school improvement council. The composition of the council was not changed by the EIA, but the improvement council's role was expanded to include:

> *"each council shall assist in the preparation of the annual school improvement report, shall assist with the development and monitoring of school improvement, and shall provide advice on the use of school incentive awards."*

Perhaps the greatest change made by the EIA was that

> *"the reports shall focus on factors found by research to be effective in improving schools, such factors to be prescribed by regulation of the State Board of Education."*

State Board of Education regulations mandate that each school undertake a comprehensive needs assessment to determine whether the following six indicators of effectiveness are evident at the local school site:

I. Positive School Climate
II. Instructional Leadership of the Principal
III. Emphasis on Academics, Particularly the Basic Skills
IV. High Expectations Related to Student Achievement
V. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress and Its Utilization in Curriculum Planning
VI. Positive Home/School Relations

The regulations also require that each school set both long-range (3 years) and short-range (each year) output objectives in four areas:

1. test scores
2. attendance
3. accreditation
4. dropout rate, if applicable.

The Quality Assessment Section, part of the Office of School District Accreditation and Assessment, in the State Department of Education analyzes information from the 92 districts regarding these areas and other indicators of quality. If schools establish realistic goals in these areas and work toward their attainment, then the district will also be moving ahead in a positive manner and should be less likely to become appraised as "quality impaired." It should be understood that any category that does not meet the state minimum standard must be addressed by the district and should, therefore, become a part of the school's improvement plan. In cases of serious impairment, the Quality Assessment Section staff travel with appointed review committees to study district problems, design improvement recommendations for State Board of Education approval, and eventually serve as monitors to track districts' progress.

CHAPTER 2
ESTABLISHING A SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT COUNCIL

The school improvement council was orginally named the school advisory council which was mandated in the Education Finance Act of 1977. Little change has occurred in the council's composition since 1977; the Education Improvement Act reinforces the original mandate of the EFA and specifies the composition of the council, the method of selection, and the length of term of service for each member.

> *Each school board of trustees shall establish an improvement council at each school in the district composed of at least two parents, elected by the parents of the children enrolled in the school; at least two teachers, elected by the faculty; at least two students in schools with grades nine and above elected by the students; other representatives of the community and persons selected by the principal; Provided, However, That the elected members of the council shall comprise at least a two-thirds majority of the membership of the council.*
>
> *In order to provide additional accountability for funds expended under the Education Finance Act and the Education Improvement Act the elected members of the school improvement council shall serve a minimum term of two years. Parents of students or students in their last year of enrollment at an individual school may serve terms of one year only. The terms shall be staggered and shall be determined by lot. Within thirty days following the election the names and addresses of all council members shall be forwarded to the State Department of Education for the purpose of sharing information. Section 59-20-60(3)*

Nominations for parents, teachers, and students (if applicable) to be elected may be gathered in many ways. However, if the names of potential members are gathered through a Parent Teacher Association, Parent Teacher Organization, or some other type support group, the nominees must be representative of the entire constituency (i.e., all parents, not just P.T.A. members).

Regardless of the time of the election, the school improvement report must be completed and submitted to the school district board of trustees no later than the first board meeting in September. This deadline must be considered when the decision to elect and appoint council members is made.

Listed below are some additional election suggestions.

1. publicize the election well in advance
2. provide information to your school community about the role of the school improvement council prior to requesting nominations
3. take nominations in such a way that everyone has an equal chance to be nominated
4. ask those nominated if they would be willing to serve if elected
5. keep polls open long enough so that parents, teachers, and students (if applicable) can vote
6. publicize election results as quickly as possible
7. follow established board policy

In making selections for the remaining council members, the principal should also balance the council in terms of race, sex, and experience. All appointments should be made by the principal with the idea that an effective school improvement council should be an agent for positive change. The school improvement council appointments provide an opportunity for the principal to involve advocates as well as adversaries in the decision-making process of the school. Appointees who serve on councils may become less critical and more supportive once they are fully aware of the facts surrounding an issue or once they become more familiar with the principal and with the school's mission. Non-constructive time and energy can be channeled into useful ac-

tivities through school improvement council participation.

The first meeting of the new council should include a get-acquainted time, an orientation to council duties, an election of officers, preparation of a meeting schedule for the year, and an overview of the school improvement plan. To assist the council in understanding its role, the principal might provide the following materials:

1. a copy of appropriate parts of the Education Improvement Act,
2. a copy of the district policy on improvement councils,
3. an information booklet describing the school and its programs,
4. a copy of the previous year's improvement plan and summary report,
5. access to school improvement council activity guides, developed by the School Council Assistance Project at the University of South Carolina,
6. a copy of the council's by-laws,
7. access to all council minutes,
8. a list of all council members with addresses and telephone numbers, and
9. a copy of appropriate district publications.

In addition, the principal may wish to share his goals for the year along with other pertinent information such as new staff, enrollment, and new programs.

By law, councils must be provided training. The EIA stipulates the following:

> *The district board of trustees shall include in its annual district report a summary of the training opportunities provided. . .for school improvement council members and professional educators in regard to council-related tasks and a summary of programs and activities involving parents and citizens in the school. Section 59-20-60 (3).*

> *The State Board of Education acting through the existing School Council Assistance Project at the University of South Carolina, shall provide services and training activities to support school improvement councils and their efforts in preparing an annual school improvement report as required in this section. Section 59-20-65.*

The principal should share with district personnel the specific needs of the council so appropriate training can be planned and implemented. Requests for training and technical assistance may also be directed to the School Improvement Section of the State Department of Education. The training activities must be included in the required district improvement report.

Role and Responsibilities of the School Improvement Council

The role and responsibilities of the school improvement council were originally delineated by the Education Finance Act of 1977 and were repeated in the Education Improvement Act of 1984. By law,

> *"each council shall assist in the preparation of the school improvement report, assist in the development and monitoring of school effectiveness, provide advice on school incentive grants, and provide such assistance as the principal may request as well as carrying out any other duties prescribed by the local school board."*

Additionally, the Act states

> *"no council shall have any of the powers and duties reserved by law or regulation to the local school board."*

The principal and school board, therefore, become the two primary determiners of the council's role and responsibilities. The council's involvement in assisting with the preparation of the report, monitoring of school improvement, and providing advice on school incentive awards is

specified by law; but any group which feels its purpose and existence is predicated only upon a legal requirement will be, at best, minimally effective. Meaningful, productive experiences provided by principals and boards will enhance the council's positive feeling regarding its purpose and will open the door for productive interaction among the school community, school and district administrators, and the school board.

CHAPTER 3
CONDUCTING THE NEEDS ASSESSMENT

The preparation of the school improvement plan requires a comprehensive needs assessment to identify the educational needs of the school. A comprehensive needs assessment follows a logical sequence.

1. Determine types and sources of data which are available and needed.
2. Gather data and other pertinent information.
3. Compile the data.
4. Interpret the data.

The needs assessment process may be a tedious and time-consuming task; however, the information gathered will provide the base for conscientious decision-making. Specific areas should be targeted for careful collection and maintenance. Separate notebooks for each area under study and permanent shelving for all council information are highly recommended.

Types and Sources of Data

State Board of Education regulations require the principal to provide the school improvement council with appropriate information which will include at the minimum:

test data for the school;
all previous school improvement plans;
demographic composition of the local school community;
success of graduates during first year of college, if applicable;
dropout information, if applicable; and
needs assessment information related to the six indicators of effective schools.

Output Data

The results of the last three administrations of the Basic Skills Assessment Program, Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Scholastic Aptitude Test, and College Board Advanced Placement Examinations must be reported for the school and must be compared to district, state, and national norms where appropriate. Reporting test data for the three previous years allows the principal and the council to detect trends and determine whether or not student performance is improving.

Attendance data must be made available by grade, school, district, and state. This will allow the council to compare the rate of attendance at its school with the rate at other schools. Attendance data for the three previous years should be reviewed to determine any trends.

Dropout data must be reviewed by the principal and the council if the school contains grades 7-12 because output objectives need to be established as part of the school improvement plan. Dropout data from past years should be reviewed to note trends.

The reports generated through the Basic Educational Data System (BEDS) of the State Department of Education should be made available to the council. This system produces various reports which describe the school programs being offered and provide information on the school staff, accreditation status, course offerings, school plant, enrollments, and the amount of resources which are made available for school operations.

Information on the school community should be made available. Those schools accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) would have this information available as a part of their most recent ten-year study. Schools not involved with SACS will need to gather data about the composition of the community including educational levels, ethnicities, socio-economic levels, family patterns, and occupational stability and about the resources in the community such as libraries, educational institutions, and active civic groups.

Indicators of Effective Schools Data

State Board of Education regulations require that the council be provided needs assessment information related to the six indicators of effective schools. The regulations also require that the needs assessment include input from the total faculty and the parents. Schools with grade 9 or above must include student input. A survey is an effective means of gathering data on the indicators of effective schools. This approach provides information about the perceptions of the group surveyed.

Several survey instruments have been designed to measure the degree to which a school meets the indicators of effectiveness. The South Carolina Department of Education has developed an instrument to survey the attitudes of professional staff, parents, and students. The student instrument is designed to survey students in grades 7-12. The Connecticut Department of Education has developed an instrument to be used with professional staff which includes an interview with teachers. Instruments have also been developed by South Carolina school districts, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Johns Hopkins University, Phi Delta Kappa, and others. A school may use or adapt for use any one of the existing instruments. An adaptation, for example, might be made to a student instrument (grades 9-12) to make it appropriate for primary age students by simply modifying the vocabulary level.

Previous school improvement plans also serve as an excellent needs assessment resource. No school should start development of a new school improvement plan without first examining the status of previous plans. The previous plans and documentation of results should be organized (in folders or notebooks) so that ready review is facilitated.

Collecting the Data

The manner in which the needs assessment is conducted will determine the quality of the data collected. Ample explanation must be given to the respondents regarding the purpose of the assessment. Either the council or members of the teaching staff should conduct the survey. The school administration should not be directly involved so that the responses by those being surveyed will not be influenced by the administration. As stated previously, all professional staff must be surveyed. When parents and students are surveyed, a sample of each group may be chosen. If the school has a large enrollment, a sample would ease the paperwork burden, and the results would still be accurate. For example, each fifth student in an alphabetical sequence in each homeroom could be selected to be surveyed. Parents from randomly selected homerooms could be chosen. In addition, schools may need to survey other groups such as senior citizens, the business community, and elected officials.

Compiling the Data

For expedient interpretation, the data must be presented in an organized manner. Attendance and drop-out data may be organized by simply showing school percentages by year for a three-year period or by giving a more detailed picture such as percentages by grade level, race, or sex. Accreditation can be reported by year in terms of classifications (all clear, advised, warned, probation, dropped) or by detailing specific deficiencies. Results of state required tests are reported to schools in a manner that does not require additional compilation; however, to be able to measure a school's effectiveness, the results should be separated into socio-economic levels, quartiles, or other appropriate break-downs to analyze growth of specific subgroups. The Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills and the Scholastic Aptitude Test are norm-referenced tests. Norm-referenced test compare students with a national sample to determine whether they are above or below the national percentile of 50. The Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, Basic Skills Assessment Program, and College Board Advanced Placement Examinations are criterion-referenced. Basic Skills Assessment Program results measure the number and percentage of students who

meet a standard established by the State Board of Education.

Survey data must be compiled in a manner that will allow for interpretation. The response sheets can be designed to be scanned or keypunched, and a print-out can be produced which will allow for proper interpretation. In many cases a frequency distribution is prepared; that is, the number of responses to each item in each category. For example, the State Department of Education survey instrument which addresses the indicators of effective schools uses the response categories below:

0 = Is not present.
1 = It is just beginning, but operates only on a very limited basis.
2 = It is present and operating, but only in certain programs or departments.
3 = It is present and operating well on a school-wide basis.
4 = Not known.
5 = Not applicable.

Figure 1

A frequency distribution will enable the principal and the council to interpret the data. (Figure 2) In this survey, twenty-five persons were asked to respond to ten items related to positive school climate using the response categories in Figure 1. Since the items are stated positively, the ideal frequency would be Response Category 3; therefore, a review of this sample frequency distribution suggests that Items 5 and 9 require study.

Sample Frequency Distribution
Positive School Climate

Item #		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
RESPONSE CATEGORY	0	2	0	0	1	4	2	0	0	14	0
	1	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	2	0
	2	3	6	6	2	0	3	2	6	0	0
	3	18	16	19	22	8	20	18	17	6	25
	4	0	1	0	0	12	0	0	2	2	0
	5	1	1	0	0	0	0	5	0	1	0

Figure 2

Interpreting the Data

The data collected and compiled which need interpretation consist of norm-referenced tests (CTBS and SAT), criterion-referenced tests (CSAB, BSAP, and AP), attendance records, dropout information, BEDS reports, information on the school community, and survey data on the indicators of effective schools. Each data source should be studied individually, and relationships should be identified. For example, if in grade 10 the test scores are low, the attendance is low, and the dropout rate is high, the principal and the council should consider whether a relationship exists among these three sources of data. A detailed study should be made to determine the reasons why such a relationship exists.

Data should be compared to the various standards which are available. Norm-referenced test results allow the principal and the council to compare the school's performance to that of the nation, the district, and the state. Criterion-referenced test results allow the principal and the council to compare the school's performance with that of the district and the state. Other data should be studied over a period of time. Has attendance improved, or is it worse? Is the dropout rate decreasing? Has the composition of the school community changed?

An analysis of the data should reveal existing needs. The principal and the council will have to identify a "need." A need for one school may not necessarily be a need for another school. For example, for a school whose CTBS scores have improved from the 30th percentile to the 40th percentile during the past three years, a need to change strategies may not exist. For a school whose test scores have remained at a low level over the past three years, a need to set new objectives and develop new strategies would exist. Each principal and school council must determine when a need actually exists. In order to determine needs, a standard or performance level will have to be established for each source of data. For example, the survey data generated by the questionnaire on the indicators of effective schools is compiled into a frequency distribution. (See Figure 2.) There are 25 respondents to each item under Positive School Climate. The principal and the council could establish the standard that an item must receive a rating of 3 by 16 of the 25 respondents or 64%. All items which do not meet this standard would be considered a need. The review of the data must result in the principal's and the council's mutual acceptance of a profile that can clearly identify needs of the school as gaps between effective levels on specific measures and ineffective levels on the same specific measures (Figure 3).

The diagram below suggests that on six indicators of effective schools, the school is not effective on indicators A, B, and C. Indicators D, E, and F are equal to or above a minimum effectiveness level.

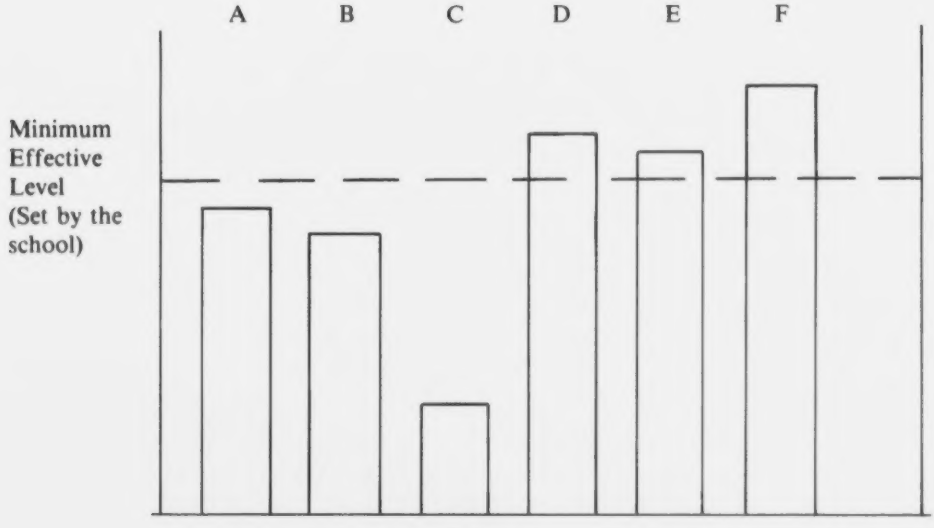

Figure 3

The school must, therefore, plan at a minimum to increase the effectiveness in indicators A, B, and C. Remember that the plan must attack all three indicators, not just one or two.

CHAPTER 4
DEVELOPING THE PLAN

A careful analysis of the needs assessment results will provide the principal and the council a basis for determining objectives. The information will tell them "where the school is" in each area to be considered. Based on this knowledge and an awareness of the school's capabilities, the principal and the council can then determine "where the school could be."

Developing the Objectives

Output objectives must be written for test scores, attendance, accreditation status, and dropout rate. Objectives for test scores must include the subtests for reading, language arts, mathematics, and science totals for the CTBS in grades 4, 5, 7, and 9. All BSAP subtest scores in grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 8, and 10 must be included in objectives. The collection of data in each of these areas for the past three-year period will provide the principal and the council with a pattern of performance. Then a realistic decision can be made for short-range objectives (year by year) as well as long-range objectives (the end of the three-year cycle). An example of a long-range output objective is:

> By June 1989, Smith Elementary School will improve its CTBS percentile scores in 4th grade reading by ten percentile points.

Short-range objectives might take an incremental approach toward reaching the long-range goal.

> **Year 1**—By June 1987, Smith Elementary School will improve its CTBS percentile scores in 4th grade reading by three percentile points.
>
> **Year 2**—By June 1988, Smith Elementary School will improve. . . by three percentile points.
>
> **Year 3**—By June 1989, Smith Elementary School will improve. . . by four percentile points.

Note that each objective describes *who* is going to do *what* by *when*. A quantitative goal is necessary to determine if an objective is met.

Objectives should express a realistic desire for improvement. The output objectives should not exceed the school's capacity to improve, but neither should they stifle a school's desire to improve. Although there are outside influences such as the district's goals, a school's objectives must be determined by the data and the needs of that school. Despite the similarity of language in the statement of output objectives, it is highly unlikely that any schools, even within the same district, would have the same output objectives for test scores, attendance, accreditation, and dropout rates.

The effective schools research emphasizes that the output objectives can be achieved if significant improvement occurs in each of the following indicators of effective schools: positive school climate, instructional leadership of the principal, emphasis on academics, monitoring student progress, high expectations related to student achievement, and positive home-school relations. Effective schools are those in which there is an abiding belief that all students can learn and are evidenced by those indicators listed above which have been adopted by the South Carolina State Board of Education as a guide for the school improvement process. Objectives written for each of these indicators are called process objectives since it is through them that the output objectives are achieved. Again both short-range and long-range objectives should be written. The following are examples of long-range and short-range process objectives written for the positive school climate indicator.

> **Long-range**—By the end of the 1987-88 school year, the cleanliness and maintenance of buildings and grounds by the custodial staff will result in ratings of good or excellent on all items of the district's observation instrument administered by district level maintenance personnel. (90-100%)

Short-range—At the annual inspection of the buildings and grounds by district level maintenance personnel, the ratings on the district observation instrument for the cleanliness and maintenance of buildings and grounds by the custodial staff will be those indicated for each year listed.

1985-86	1986-87	1987-88
92%	93%	94%

Based on the composite set of needs determined through the needs assessment process, the principal and the council must identify and describe a set of process objectives designed to meet all the identified deficiencies. The rule of thumb is to write as few objectives as possible that will cover as many of the deficient areas as possible. There is no specific number or set of objectives. In fact, it is impossible to have an obvious minimum number or set of objectives since both the number of objectives and the content of the objectives are determined by the identified weaknesses in a specific school rather than in all schools. Although schools in a specific category (such as all schools in one district, all elementary schools, or all secondary schools) might use the same or similar language to state process objectives, criteria for those objectives will be different for each school. The role of the principal in this process is to assure that the council agrees upon the objectives as described.

Developing the Strategies

Starting with any one of the objectives, the principal and the council should brainstorm all possible strategies that are considered necessary to reach the objective. Because the school improvement plan should be comprehensive, the principal and the council must consider all existing programs in its brainstorming activity. For example, all the school's efforts in remedial and compensatory education; in BSAP, CTBS, SAT, and College Board Advanced Placement Examinations testing; in gifted and talented instruction; in complying with district goals, objectives, or plans of action; in meeting ***Defined Minimum Program*** and SACS standards; and in providing staff development ought to be part of the strategies rather than detached, separate plans. A function of the school improvement plan is to tie all the school's programs and efforts together - to bring unity rather than "to have one more plan to write."

Following the brainstorming activity, each proposed strategy could be written on a strip of paper (Figure 4) and placed on a table. No sequencing is needed at this step. Writing each strategy in pencil is recommended because wording changes may be made frequently.

Brainstormed Strategies

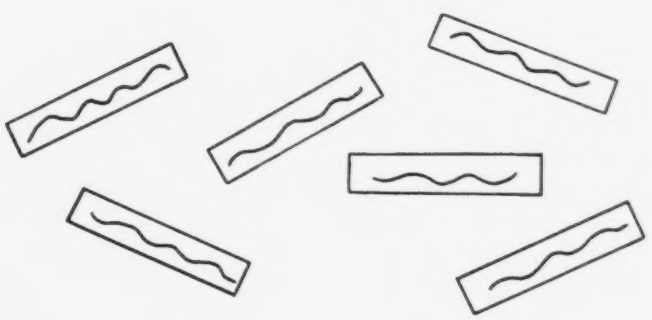

Figure 4

Each strategy should be self-explanatory. For example, instead of "conduct in-service session," a more complete strategy would be "conduct an all-day in-service session on the interpretation of CTBS results with the entire faculty and the school improvement council." The ex-

panded version of the proposed strategy retains meaning when it stands alone whereas the terse version does not.

After all possible strategies are recorded, the principal and the council should review them to remove trivial or unnecessary strategies, to combine strategies when possible, and to determine that all strategies are self-explanatory. If a strategy is not self-explanatory, the narrative should be expanded. All strategies should be as specific as possible. For example, a strategy might say "conduct an in-service for teachers" or "conduct a public relations in-service for all teachers and council members." The second version is more specific and provides more information with which the school can work.

Now that the set of strategies has been reduced, the strategies should be sequenced when possible. A method for sequencing is to place the strips of paper with the strategies written on them on a table, leaving space between each strip. Then the strips can be arranged so the strategies are in a sequential order. The last strategy should be essentially the same as the stated objective. (Figure 5)

Objective: Develop a program by May 30, 1987, to reduce truancy by 10% over the baseline truancy level for the school.

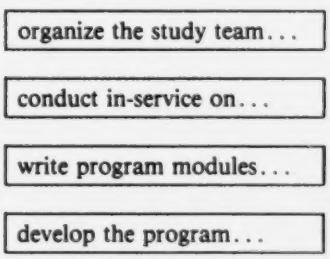

Figure 5

No attempt should be made to number the strategies, assign responsibilities, establish costs or funding sources, or assign specific deadlines for completion. The strategies will receive this additional information after the sequencing process is complete.

When this preliminary step is completed, the principal and the council would start asking "Does this strategy lead directly to the next strategy?" about each one until the full sequence is complete. If the answer is "no," the group should either construct a new intermediate strategy ("conduct literature review...") and place it on the table (Figure 6) or find an existing strategy which is appropriate and put the strip in the proper position. Note in the example that all new strategies are placed on the table in an indented position so that the original strategies remain apparent to the council. In the example, still another strategy was needed, namely, "prepare a report on the literature...." The question should be asked again. The example shows still another strategy was needed, namely, "prepare the in-service program...." Question again; this time the next strategy is as originally determined, namely, "conduct in-service on...." This pro-

cess should be continued until all essential strategies are included.

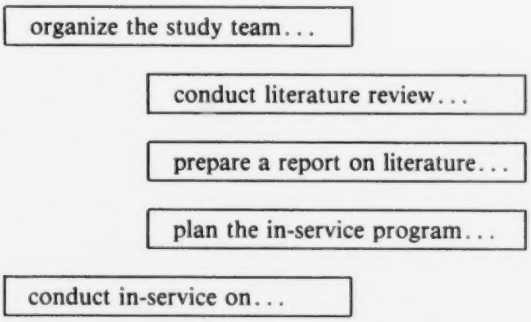

Figure 6

Setting the Strategy Budget, Personnel, and Deadlines

Only after all strategies have been identified and described should the strategies be numbered (1, 2, 3, ...N). (Figure 7) Next a person must be assigned the responsibility for the implementation of the strategy. This assignment should be as specific as possible; for example, Jones rather than librarian or Brown rather than assistant principal. A cost value should be determined for each strategy; some strategies may not need funding beyond the use of supplies and resources already on hand. Deadline dates should be established for each strategy. In order to simplify this process, all deadlines can be at the end of months. In determining deadlines, attention should be given to sequence so that if one strategy is totally dependent upon a previous one, the deadline dates should be logical and reflect that dependency. The last strategy deadline should, of course, be no later than the date for the accomplishment of the objective. Very often at this stage in planning, adjustments will have to be made in the strategy timeline in order to meet the objective deadline.

Objective: Develop a program by May 30, 1987, to reduce truancy by 10% over the baseline truancy level for the school.

The Strategy Planning

Strategies	Person Responsible	Cost	Deadline
1. Organize the study team...	Jones	$50.00	March 30, 1986
2. Conduct literature review...	Brown	—	April 30, 1986
(other steps not shown)			
N. Develop the program...	Adams	$200.00	May 30, 1987

Figure 7

Reviewing and Revising the Strategies

Having developed the strategies for one objective, the principal and the council must reflect upon the work and determine the probability of the objective's being reached if all the strategies are successfully completed. If the answer is yes, then the implementation process should begin. If the answer is no, then the principal and the council should once again go through the strategy planning process. Going ahead with a poor plan may negatively affect the school's improvement efforts and attitude toward planning. A plan predestined for failure should not be implemented.

One value of any plan is its capacity for change. From the needs assessment through objective and strategy development to the implementation process, changes can (and probably should) be made.

When the principal and the council have developed strategies for all the process objectives and have reached consensus that the plan is one which will meet the needs of the school as it seeks to improve or maintain its effectiveness, the plan is sent to the faculty for review. Although the faculty has been involved in the needs assessment and has been represented on the council, the principal should review the planning process and offer time for input. Some suggestions offered by the faculty may be viable while others will need to be discarded. The council under the direction of the principal must make these decisions.

As required by law (EFA, 1977) the annual school improvement plan must be submitted to the school district board of trustees no later than the first board meeting in September of each year. "*Each school district board of trustees shall:*

> *(a) prepare a written appraisal of the report of each school with emphasis on needs, goals, objectives and plans for the utilization of resources." (EFA 59-20-60 (4))*

Based on the response from the school district board of trustees, the principal and the council will make necessary revisions before implementing the plan. Once the revisions are made to the plan, copies should be made for the faculty and administration, for posting, and for distribution to interested parties.

CHAPTER 5
IMPLEMENTING THE PLAN

Needs assessments have been conducted and analyzed; objectives, both output and process, have been written; and strategies including the who, when, and how much have been developed. The planning year has ended. The plan which is designed for a three-year implementation cycle is put into effect. Throughout the cycle, the plan will be monitored and adjusted based on annual data sources such as test scores and on the annual school summary report information. A full scale needs assessment will not be necessary again until the third year of implementation. During that year, the existing plan continues to be implemented as the council concurrently undergoes extensive planning for the next three-year period.

Although a written plan increases the probability of success, the plan must be implemented, monitored, and adjusted to assure success. The plan, once completed, should be reviewed by the principal to be sure appropriate revisions have been made. Then an in-service should be scheduled with the faculty to review with them the planning procedure which was used to develop the initial school improvement plan. Ideally, small group discussions should be held so that the principal can answer questions raised by the faculty and receive input from the group. A final copy should be distributed to each faculty and council member.

Each faculty, staff, and council member should know *who* is to do *what* by *when*. The principal should be sure that all assignments have been discussed with the persons who will be responsible and should encourage them to keep a list of their responsibilities and the deadlines so that the implementation process can stay on schedule and the objectives be achieved. The principal should compile a separate listing of strategies across all objectives by month so that for each month he has a listing of total strategies and can check them off as they are completed. (Figure 8)

Objective	1	2	3	4
	Strategies	Strategies	Strategies	Strategies
September	1.	1.	1.	1.
	2.	2.	2.	2.
	3.	3.	3.	3.
October	4.	4.	4.	4.
	5.		5.	5.
	6.		6.	6.
			7.	7.
			8.	

Strategies for September

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____

Strategies for October

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Figure 8

Throughout the implementation years, the principal and the council are expected to monitor and adjust the strategies. Although monitoring should not add a burden to an already busy prin-

cipal and council, it is vital that monitoring occurs regularly and that the plan does not gather dust until time for the summary report to be written. Monitoring should be designed to encourage adjustments when necessary to reach the objectives. Sometimes the school plan in the implementation stage will reach a major obstacle. The principal and the council might meet it by (1) adjusting resources in strategies, (2) reducing expectations stated in the objective, (3) circumventing with alternate strategies, or (4) stopping the plan. Drastic changes in the plan should be communicated to the faculty, district personnel, and any others involved in the implementation of the plan.

The principal and the council must maintain a well organized data collection system for all of the needs assessment materials and results as well as the evidence for each objective. The system might be a file with a folder for each objective or a set of notebooks with dividers or any system that will allow for complete and orderly maintenance of essential data. Results of each strategy should be recorded whether the results are positive or negative. Very often negative results of a strategy or the failure to complete one will indicate some changes should occur in the plan. Also results should be recorded at the strategy deadline so that the school will always know where it stands during the implementation process. A primary purpose of collecting evidence on the results is to improve the possibility of replicating good plans and to correct poor plans so that they may be more effective in the future. The data in the file system become an excellent reference for completing the evaluation of program effectiveness portion of the school's summary report.

Even though the school improvement plan has been monitored and adjusted as it has been implemented, the real assessment comes as the school summary report is completed. Then the objectives are measured against the evidence that has been gathered. Obviously, a school would like to meet all of its output objectives and process objectives for the year. The school reports during the implementation years should show movement toward the established long-range output and process objectives. Any objectives not met during the year must be included in the school's plan for the following year, and additional objectives might be added to help a school become effective or maintain an accepted level of effectiveness. For a school to be effective, all indicators of effectiveness must be evident at all times.

Preparing the School Summary Report

Each school must submit to its board of trustees a summary of the school improvement plan prior to October 31 (EFA amended) of each year. The school summary report must provide, as a minimum, the following information: (a) specific results of the school's testing program, (b) a summary of the approved objectives identified in the annual school improvement plan, (c) an evaluation of program effectiveness for the previous school year.

The school's testing program refers to the CTBS, BSAP, CSAB, SAT, and the AP Examinations. The scores for each test administered to students must be reported for the previous school year; however, a school may report the results for the past three years if it chooses. The results must be recorded in such a way as to compare the school's scores to the district, state, and national distributions using either mean, median, or percent meeting standard.

The next section of the summary report is a listing of all the approved objectives in the three-year school improvement plan for the current year. As indicated earlier, all objectives must be written in measurable terms.

The final section of the summary report is the evaluation of program effectiveness for the previous year. Beginning with the 1985-86 school year, this information will be a part of the school's annual plan. Thus, the information recorded in the annual school improvement plan can be used to produce the school's summary report. Program effectiveness must address the following: (1) The extent to which objectives stated in the previous year's annual school improvement

plan have been achieved. Specific evidence must be cited. (2) Accreditation ratings by state and regional agencies must be cited. (3) Other indicators as judged appropriate by the principal and the school improvement council should be included.

All of these areas are organized in the school improvement plan so that objectives and evidence of attainment for each of the four output areas (test scores, attendance, dropout rate, accreditation) as well as for the six established indicators of school effectiveness (positive school climate, instructional leadership of the principal, emphasis on academics including basic skills, monitoring student progress, high expectations related to student achievement, and positive home-school relations) and any additional areas of effectiveness can be recorded. The completion of this section will enable the principals and the council to recognize achievements and to make adjustments in the plan for the following year.

In addition to submitting the school summary report to the board of trustees, the school must provide a copy of the summary report to the Accreditation Section, State Department of Education by November 15. Upon approval of the summary report by the board of trustees, the school also must distribute the information to parents of the children enrolled in the school no later than October 31. The summary report might logically be included in a newsletter to parents. As a public relations tool, the summary report might be distributed to other school community groups such as civic organizations, business groups, Adopt-A-School partners, and realtors.

Conclusion

Improvement comes with trying. The school improvement plan must be implemented if it is to produce any measure of success. Many changes may be made in the plan over its three-year implementation period. Making changes in a plan indicates it is being used rather than being just one more report to write, to submit to proper authorities, and then to be left on a shelf until summary report time.

CHAPTER 6
REVIEWING DISTRICT REQUIREMENTS

The school's improvement plan and summary report are certainly tools for the school to use as it focuses on improvement and effectiveness. Further, the plan and the report assist the district in setting its own objectives and planning its staff development activities. Just as schools are required to do extensive planning and reporting, districts must develop and implement a district improvement report and an annual district staff development report.

District Improvement Report

The district improvement report must be submitted to the local board of trustees and to the State Department of Education by November 15 of each year (EFA amended). The report has two sections. The first section, the district improvement plan, is divided into four parts: district test results, output objectives, district needs assessment process, and other objectives and district implementation strategies. The district must report the results for the three previous administrations for the following tests: Basic Skills Assessment Program; Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery; Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills; Scholastic Aptitude Test; and College Board Advanced Placement Examinations. Output objectives must be written in measurable terms for one-year, two-year, and three-year terms for test scores, attendance, accreditation, and dropout rate. This section of the report corresponds to that of the local school. In addition, a narrative must be written describing the types of data sources used, the kinds of activities conducted, and the variety of people included in the needs assessment for the district. Also the district must submit other objectives and district implementation strategies for a three-year period including both long-range and short-range objectives which are written in measurable terms. For these objectives, strategies must be developed and reported. The district should use the same strategy planning process as the school so that, for each strategy, budget requirements are determined and dates of implementation are set. The district must also list the schools which will be participating in the attainment of the objectives. Much of this information will be taken from the local school improvement plan.

The second section containing five parts is an evaluation of program effectiveness. The district must list all the output objectives and other objectives of the previous report and describe the progress it has made in meeting the objectives. Specific and complete evidence of attainment must be cited. If an objective has not been met, it must be included in the plan for the following year, or some justification must be given to support its deletion from the plan. The district must also indicate whether or not each objective has been mandated by the Quality Assessment Review. Any objectives so mandated must be given top priority by the district.

Further, the district must describe the process used to evaluate the attainment of the objectives. This description must include the activities conducted to gather information and the sources of the data collection. This annual process replaces the comprehensive needs assessment which is conducted during the planning year of the three-year cycle.

Part four of section two requires the district to describe the training that has been given or is to be given the members of the school improvement councils. This training is required by law. Also a summary must be written to describe the district activities and programs which have included or involved parents and other citizens. School districts should include volunteer, Adopt-A-School, and senior citizens programs, to name a few.

Finally, the district must provide a brief description of the process it used to submit its fiscal and programmatic report to the people of the district. Many districts choose to present this information in a brochure while others use the local newspaper. Whatever the means of communication, it should be described in this part of the report.

District Staff Development Report

Another significant item a school must include in its plan is staff development activities. From the needs assessment, many ideas for staff development should emerge. The school must make the district aware of its staff development needs so that, along with the school, the district can plan appropriate and meaningful staff development activities and can design the district calendar to offer the activities at appropriate times. Each school district must prepare an annual district staff development report in a format suitable to the district and submit it to the local board of trustees and to the State Department of Education by November 15. The activities should be designed to improve the competency of all educational personnel and to address the educational program needs identified in the school and district improvement plans. It is critical that the district follow the guidelines outlined in the ***Defined Minimum Program for South Carolina School Districts*** as it prepares its staff development report.

1. A master plan for staff development must be developed on a district basis.
2. The program shall be continuous and go beyond the ten days of staff development required to receive state aid.
3. A description of the procedures used to determine staff development needs should be stated to include needs assessment activities, data sources, and the personnel utilized to develop the staff development program.
4. A detailed description of identified staff development needs should reflect an analysis of student and staff competencies and be categorized according to short- and long-range priorities. School program needs such as curriculum development and instructional improvement should also be considered.
5. Objectives for both long-term and annual staff development needs should be specific, clearly stated and consistent with identified needs.
6. Activities and strategies which will enable the objectives to be met should be established to determine whether objectives have been achieved.
7. The educational personnel and/or schools participating in the staff development should be identified.
8. Accurate estimates required to conduct the staff development program should be stated in specific dollar amounts. If no funds are required to implement a particular staff development program, state that fact.
9. The annual plan must provide a calendar of specific dates and times for staff development activities. The calendar must reflect the number of clock hours allotted for each staff development activity.
10. A continuous and final evaluation plan with provisions for feedback from all levels of staff involvement should be included.
11. Activities should be planned for an entire district or school staff, by subject area and/or grade level, or on an individual basis.

Conclusion

In summary, the school improvement plan assists the district in setting its objectives and planning its staff development activities just as the school might easily include district goals or programs in its plan. The school and the district must work closely to serve their students in an effective manner. If the school does not list its real needs or if it does not provide a budgetary figure for a strategy, the district cannot accurately plan for the school as part of the total district plan. The district plan is very similar to that of the school except that the indicators of effectiveness do not apply to the district. The research has emphasized that the indicators of effectiveness are school-based, not district-based; but as the district incorporates the individual school plans into the district plan, there is no doubt that district goals will support the schools in their pursuit of effectiveness.

THE LAW RELATED TO SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT

STATUTES PERTAINING TO THE SCHOOL AND DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT PROCESS AND COUNCILS

A. Original Statutory Provision - Education Finance Act of 1977

(3) Each school district board of trustees shall cause each school in the district to prepare an annual written report including, but not limited to:

(a) depicting the program being offered in each pupil classification and

(b) recommending needed programmatic improvements in each pupil classification for the ensuing years. This report shall present an explict statement of the needs of the students; shall define specific goals and objectives, and propose an identifiable strategy for priorities in the expenditure of funds to achieve the stated objectives. The full report and a summary report from each school in the district shall be completed in a format approved by the State Board of Education and shall be submitted to the school district board of trustees no later than March 1st of each year, and upon approval by the board the summary report shall be distributed to the parents of the children enrolled in the school no later than the first week of the ensuing school year. Each school board of trustees shall establish an advisory council at each school in the district composed of at least two parents, elected by the parents of the children enrolled in the school; at least two teachers, elected by the faculty; at least two students in schools with grades nine and above, elected by students; other representatives of the community and persons selected by the principal; provided, however, that the elected members of the committee shall comprise at least two-thirds majority of the membership of the committee. These councils shall be constituted in each school no later than January 1, 1978. Each council shall assist in the preparation of the annual school report required in this section and shall provide such assistance as the principal may request as well as carrying out any other duties prescribed by the local school board. The local school board shall make provisions to allow any council to file a separate report to the local school board if the council deems it necessary. However, no council shall have any of the powers and duties reserved by law or regulation to the local school board.

(4) Each school district board of trustees shall:

(a) prepare a written appraisal of the report of each school with emphasis on needs, goals, objectives and plans for the utilization of resources.

(b) cause to be prepared an annual written report to account for funds expended in each pupil classification as prescribed by the State Board of Education.

(c) participate in the statewide testing program as prescribed by the State Board of Education.

(d) maintain an ongoing systematic evaluation of the educational program needs in the district and shall develop a comprehensive annual and long-range plan for meeting these programs needs. These plans shall include an assessment of needs. At minimum, the process of assessing needs and

establishing goals and objectives shall be carried out for each of the program classifications specified in 59-20-40(1)(c). Each school district board of trustees shall develop and execute a method of evaluating the extent to which the goals and objectives specified in its comprehensive plan are being achieved and shall annually report the results of its evaluation to the people of the school district and to the State Board of Education.

(e) provide a program for staff development for all educational personnel on an annual and long-range basis. A portion of the funds in the foundation program shall be used for this staff development that may include, but not be limited to: (1) college courses in education, subject area of certification or management; (2) teaching center offerings; (3) State Department of Education workshops, and (4) district-wide or in-school training for the purpose of fostering professional growth or improving the competence of all educational personnel.

(f) In accordance with a format approved by the State Board of Education, each school district board of trustees shall annually submit to the State Board of Education and to the people of the district that district's fiscal report. Each school district shall annually submit to the State Board of Education and to the people of the district that district's programmatic report including results of the required testing program, the annual long-range plan and the evaluation of program effectiveness by August fifteenth (15th) of each year.

(5) The State Department of Education shall:

(a) prepare written appraisal on the reports of the schools with special emphasis on needs, goals, objectives and plans for the utilization of resources.

(b) review each district's annual fiscal report, annual and long-range plan, and its evaluation of programmatic effectiveness. On the basis of this review the department shall provide information in a published report to the local school board of trustees, the Superintendent and other administrative personnel of the district for improvement in the program and in correcting the deficiencies discovered.

B. **1980 Amendment to Section (3) (b):**

The full report from each school in the district shall be completed in a format approved by the State Board of Education and shall be submitted to the school district boards of trustees no later than March first (1st) of each year. The school shall receive the written appraisal from the school district board of trustees no later than June thirtieth (30th) of each year. A copy of the full report and written appraisal shall be forwarded to the State Department of Education. A summary of the full report and appraisal shall be prepared in a format approved by the State Board of Education.

C. **1980 Amendment to Section (3) (b):**

Notwithstanding any other provision of this item, when an area vocational center establishes a local school advisory council, it shall be composed as defined exclusively by federal law. The council shall perform all duties and responsibilities provided for in any state or federal law which applies to such councils.

D. **1981 Amendment to Section (3) (b):**

The full report and summary report from each school in the district shall be completed in a format developed or approved by the District Board of Trustees based upon

guidelines adopted by the State Board of Education. The full report shall be submitted to the District Board of Trustees no later than March first (1st) of each year. The school shall receive the written appraisal of its annual school report from the School Board of Trustees no later than June thirtieth (30th) of each year. Thereafter, the summary shall be prepared and distributed to the parents of the children enrolled in the school no later than September thirtieth (30th) of each year.

E. **1981 Amendment - replaced Section (5) (a) of EFA:**

(5) The State Department of Education shall:

(a) receive and review the summary report from each school.

F. **1983 Amendment to Section (4) (f):**

(4) (f) change "August" to "September."

G. **1984 Amendment by EIA - replace Section (3) of EFA:**

Each school district board of trustees shall cause each school in the district to prepare an annual written report to be known as the school improvement report. The reports shall focus on factors found by research to be effective in improving schools, such factors to be prescribed by regulation of the State Board of Education. The State Board of Education shall prescribe the format of the reports and the manner in which they must be developed and submitted. Each school board of trustees shall establish an improvement council at each school in the district composed of at least two parents, elected by the parents of the children enrolled in the school; at least two teachers, elected by the faculty; at least two students in schools with grades nine and above, elected by students; other representatives of the community and persons selected by the principal; provided, however, that the elected members of the committee shall comprise at least two-thirds majority of the membership of the council. These councils must be constituted in each school no later than January 1, 1978. Each council shall assist in the preparation of the annual school improvement report required in this section, shall assist with the development and monitoring of school improvement, shall provide advice on the use of school incentive grant awards, and shall provide such assistance as the principal may request as well as carrying out any other duties prescribed by the local school board. The local school board shall make provisions to allow any council to file a separate report to the local school board if the council considers it necessary. However, no council shall have any of the powers and duties reserved by law or regulation to the local school board. Notwithstanding any other provisions of this term, when an area vocational center establishes a local school improvement council, it shall be composed as defined exclusively by federal law. The council shall perform all duties and responsibilities provided for in any state or federal law which applies to such councils.

In order to provide additional accountability for funds expended under the Education Finance Act and the Education Improvement Act the elected members of the school improvement council shall serve a minimum term of two years. Parents of students or students in their last year of enrollment at an individual school may serve terms of one year only. The terms shall be staggered and shall be determined by lot. Within thirty (30) days following the election the names and addresses of all council members shall be forwarded to the State Department of Education for the purpose of sharing information. The district board of trustees shall include in its annual district report a summary of the training opportunities provided or to be provided for school improvement council members and professional educators in regard to council-related tasks and a summary of programs and activities involving parents and citizens in the school.

H. **1984 Amendment to EIA (59-20-65):**

The State Board of Education, acting through the existing School Council Assistance Project at the University of South Carolina, shall provide services and training activities to support school improvement councils and their efforts in preparing an annual school improvement report as required in this section.

I. **1985 Amendment to Section (4) (f):**

(4) (f) Change "September" to "November."

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION IMPLEMENTATION REGULATIONS FOR SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT LEGISLATION

Regulation 43-261
Education Improvement Act of 1984
(Revised October 1985)

A. School Improvement Councils

Each school board shall establish a school improvement council at each school in accordance with the provisions of 1984 Act No. 512, Part II, S 9, Division II, Subdivision E, Sub-Part 2, Subsection 1, 2 (Code of Laws S 59-20-60 (3)).

B. The Role of School Improvement Councils

Each council shall carry out its duties as prescribed by the Education Finance Act as amended.

C. School Improvement Report

Each school shall prepare an annual written report to be known as the school improvement report. The report shall focus on factors found by research to be effective in improving schools and shall address as a minimum the following indicators of school effectiveness.

1. Positive School Climate
2. Instructional Leadership of the Principal
3. The School's Emphasis on Academics, Including Basic Skills
4. Frequent Monitoring of Student Progress and Its Utilization in Curriculum Planning
5. High Expectations Related to Student Achievement
6. Positive Home-School Relations

The school improvement report shall consist of two sections. Section one shall contain the local school improvement plan developed during the planning phase, and section two shall contain the annual evaluation of the effectiveness in meeting the objectives in the approved school improvement plan.

Section one of the school improvement report shall include the following:

1. a reporting of the required test results for the previous three years;
2. measurable objectives for test scores, attendance, accreditation ratings, and dropout rate;
3. a description of the needs assessment process used to develop the school improvement plan; and
4. objectives and strategies for each indicator of school effectiveness.

Section two shall include the following:

1. an evaluation of the success in meeting the previous year's output objectives in the school's improvement plan;
2. an evaluation of the success in meeting the previous year's objectives in the six areas of school effectiveness described in the school's improvement plan; and
3. a summary of the process used to evaluate the extent to which all objectives have been achieved.

The principal shall provide each improvement council with appropriate information so that it can provide advisory assistance with the development and monitoring of the school's improvement efforts. This information shall include, but not be limited to:

Test data for the school;
Total school improvement plans;

Demographic composition of the local school community;
Success of graduates during first year of college, if applicable;
Dropout information, if applicable; and
Needs assessment information as related to the six indicators of effective schools.

During the planning year the school must undertake a comprehensive needs assessment of its effectiveness. The needs assessment shall at a minimum:

1. Address the six designated indicators of school effectiveness;
2. Include the responses from the total faculty;
3. Include input from the parents and students, if appropriate; and
4. Include the results of standardized tests for the school.

The school improvement report must be submitted to the local board of trustees by the first board meeting in September. The local board of trustees shall prepare a written appraisal of the school improvement report in accordance with Section 59-20-60 (4)(a) of the South Carolina Code of Laws.

D. School Summary Report

Each school shall be required to produce a summary report of the school improvement report. This summary must provide, as a minimum, the following information: the specific results of the school's testing programs; a summary of the approved objectives; and the evaluation of the program effectiveness as it relates to the preceding year's approved objectives. The summary must be submitted to the parents of the children enrolled in the school by October 31 of each year. The School Summary Report shall be sent to the State Department of Education by November 15 of each year as required by the Education Finance Act as amended.

E. District Improvement Report

Each school district shall prepare an annual report to be known as the annual district improvement report. This report shall consist of two sections. Section one shall contain the district improvement plan developed during the planning phase, and section two shall contain the evaluation of the effectiveness of the implementation of the approved plan.

Section one shall include the following:

1. a report of the required test results for the three previous years;
2. measurable output objectives for the test scores, attendance, accreditation ratings, and dropout rate;
3. a description of the needs assessment process used to develop the plan; and
4. other district objectives and implementation strategies.

Section two shall include the following:

1. an evaluation of the attainment of the previous year's output objectives in the improvement plan;
2. an evaluation of the attainment of all other objectives for the previous year;
3. a summary of the process used to evaluate the attainment of the annual objectives;
4. a summary of the training provided council members and of the activities involving parents and citizens; and
5. a description of the process by which the district submitted its programmatic report to the people of the district.

The district improvement report shall be sent to the local board of trustees and the State Department of Education by November 15 of each year as required by the Education Finance Act as amended.

F. District Staff Development Report

Each school district shall prepare an annual district staff development report designed to

improve the competency of all educational personnel. Educational personnel refers to teachers, administrators, and paraprofessionals assigned to instructional duties. The program for staff development must address, as a minimum, the educational needs identified in the school improvement reports and the annual district improvement report. The district staff development report shall be completed in a format appropriate to each district and shall be submitted to the local board of trustees and the Accreditation Section, State Department of Education, by November 15 of each year as required by the Education Finance Act as amended.

G. The Department of Education and the School Council Assistance Project at the University of South Carolina shall be available to provide services and training activities to support school improvement councils and their efforts in preparing an annual school improvement report.

Appendix C

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

The following information provides a timetable for the preparation and submission of all reports required by the South Carolina Education Finance Act of 1977, as amended by the Education Improvement Act of 1984.

Activity	Person or Group Responsible	Date Due
1. Prepare school improvement report	Principal & Vocational Director, with assistance of school improvement council	Date to be decided by local district but due to district board of trustees by first board meeting in September
2. A written appraisal of the school improvement report is completed and returned to the school	District Board of Trustees	No later than October 15
3. Prepare a summary of the full school improvement report and board of trustees' appraisal	Principal & Vocational Director, with assistance of school improvement council	Prior to October 31
4. Prepare district improvement report	District Board of Trustees, Superintendents	Prior to November 15*
5. Prepare district staff development report	District Superintendent	Prior to November 15*
6. Approve: a. district staff development report b. district improvement report	District Board of Trustees	Prior to November 15*
7. Submit to Office of School District Accreditation and Assessment a. school summary report b. district staff development report c. district improvement report	Superintendent	November 15*
8. Submit district fiscal and programmatic report to the people of the school district	District Board of Trustees	No later than November 15
9. Submit approved school summary report to parents of children in each school	Principal & Vocational Director	No later than October 31
10. Appraisal by State Department of Education: a. school summary report b. district staff development report c. district improvement report	School District Accreditation and Assessment	No later than December 31

**Dates reports are due to Office of School District Accreditation and Assessment, State Department of Education. Local school administrators should develop a schedule for preparing and submitting reports to district board of trustees to insure that they are filed with the State Department of Education by due date.*

STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE PREPARATION OF THE ANNUAL SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT REPORT, SCHOOL SUMMARY REPORT, ANNUAL DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT REPORT, AND ANNUAL DISTRICT STAFF DEVELOPMENT REPORT

The School Improvement Report

I. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Section one shall describe a three-year plan for school improvement and needs assessment used to develop the plan. This section is completed during the planning phase of a three-year cycle. It is updated annually during the interim years only if needed.

A. Test Results

The results of the three previous years administration of the Basic Skills Assessment Program, the Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (at a minimum, reading, language arts, mathematics, and science subtests), the Scholastic Aptitude Test, and the Advanced Placement Examination within the school shall be reported using statistics that shall be compared to district, state, and national distributions, where appropriate (mean, median, percent meeting standard). When reporting test results for Scholastic Aptitude Test, indicate the number of students who fall into each of the following range of scores for Math and Verbal: 200-299, 300-399, 400-499, 500-599, 600-699, 700-800.

1. For those students who have successfully completed, at a minimum, college preparatory Algebra I, Geometry, English I, and English II.
2. For those students who have not successfully completed college preparatory Algebra I, Geometry, English I, and English II.

B. Output Objectives

Each school must list measurable output objectives for test scores, pupil attendance, accreditation, and, if applicable, dropout data. Objectives must be written in each area for each year of the three-year cycle. Objectives must be developed for all subtests of the BSAP and, at a minimum, reading, language arts, mathematics, and science subtests of the CTBS.

C. Needs Assessment Process

The process that was used to identify the educational needs of the school must be described. A comprehensive needs assessment is only necessary in the planning phase of the three-year improvement cycle. This description shall include:

1. The information used and the activities conducted. At a minimum, these activities must include a survey of the six indicators of effective schools completed by the entire faculty, the results of standardized tests, input from parents, and, if appropriate, input from students. Additional records, Basic Educational Data System reports, and public meetings should be used if this information will give the school a more complete picture of its effectiveness;
2. A description of how the school improvement council participated in the needs assessment process; and
3. The participants involved in the process.

D. Objectives Relating to the Indicators of School Effectiveness

This section contains the plan that the school will follow after the approval of the

report by the local board of trustees. This plan shall have measurable objectives for each year of a three-year period of implementation. Objectives shall focus on the six indicators of effective schools and other factors identified by the school as important. It is not necessary to have objectives in all areas because the needs assessment process might show that a school does not need improvement in all areas. If no objectives were established in one or more areas, for example, "Positive School Climate," then the plan should so indicate by citing the evidence of effectiveness. For each of the three years, strategies for achieving the objectives must be included, as well as budget requirements and projected dates of implementation. Pages 4, 5, and 6 in the school improvement report must be photocopied by the school and used as needed to complete all the information required in the report.

After a comprehensive needs assessment is conducted to develop the initial plan, future modifications during the implementation period may be made by using test scores or other data.

II. EVALUATION OF PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

At the end of each year, the school will report the evaluation of the attainment of that year's objectives. The report must include the following information:

A. Evaluation of the Attainment of the Output Objectives

Results of the evaluation of the attainment of all output objectives for the previous year must be listed. The objectives must be listed along with the data indicating the degree to which the objective was met.

B. Evaluation of the Attainment of Objectives Relating to the Indicators of School Effectiveness

Results of the evaluation of the attainment of all objectives relating to the six indicators of school effectiveness for the previous year must be listed. The objectives must be listed along with the data indicating the degree to which the objective was met.

C. Evaluation Process

The process used to evaluate the attainment of the previous year's objectives must be described. This must include the activities conducted to gather information and from whom information was collected.

School Summary Report

The school summary report must provide, as a minimum, the following information:

A. Specific Results of the School's Testing Program

The School's Testing Program refers to the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills, Basic Skills Assessment Program, Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, Scholastic Aptitude Test, and Advanced Placement Examination. The test results shall be reported in such a manner that will compare the school's results to the district, state, and national distributions (mean, median, percent meeting standard). Scores for all subtests of the BSAP and, at a minimum, the scores for reading, language arts, mathematics, and science on the CTBS must be reported. A school may report only the test scores for the most recent year.

B. A Summary of the Approved Objectives Identified in the Annual School Improvement Report

All objectives for the upcoming year in the school's three-year improvement plan

shall be listed. For example, the 1986 summary will include objectives for the 1986-87 school year.

C. Evaluation of Program Effectiveness for the Previous School Year

Program effectiveness must be stated in terms of the following:

1. The extent to which objectives stated in the previous year's annual school improvement report have been achieved. Specific evidence must be cited.
2. Accreditation ratings by state and regional agencies.
3. Other indicators as judged appropriate by the school improvement council.

District Improvement Report

The district improvement report should reflect the district's objectives as well as provide the means through which each school can meet its own objectives. The report submitted to the State Department of Education must include, as a minimum, the following information:

I. DISTRICT IMPROVEMENT PLAN

A. District Test Results

Basic Skills Assessment Program (all subtests), Cognitive Skills Assessment Battery, Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills (at a minimum, reading, language arts, mathematics, and science subtests), Scholastic Aptitude Test, and Advanced Placement Examination results shall be reported for the past three years. The district results shall be compared to state and national distributions, using an appropriate summary statistic (mean, median, percent meeting standard).

B. Output Objectives

Each district must list the specific output objectives for test scores, pupil attendance, accreditation, and dropouts. The objectives should be stated in terms of one-year, two-year, and three-year objectives and must be measurable.

C. District Needs Assessment Process

This section must include the information used, activities conducted and the extent of involvement of students, faculty, administrators, improvement councils, and the general public. A comprehensive needs assessment is necessary only in the planning phase of the three-year cycle.

D. Other Objectives and District Implementation Strategies

This section contains the three-year plan the district will follow after approval of the report by the local board of trustees. This plan should have measurable objectives for each year of a three-year period. Objectives should focus on needs identified by the district, not necessarily the six indicators of school effectiveness. For each of the three years, strategies for achieving the objectives, budget requirements, and projected dates of implementation must be included.

All student classifications that are reported to the State Department of Education (Office of Finance) must be addressed in the report. If a particular objective encompasses all student classifications, then that should be stated. If, however, a particular objective need only affects one classification, for example, visually handicapped, then that should be noted. If no objectives are identified for one classification of students, then that should also be noted.

Any changes in the plan should be indicated during the implementation period when the annual report is developed.

II. EVALUATION OF PROGRAM EFFECTIVENESS

At the end of each year, the district will report the evaluation of the attainment of that year's objectives. The report must include the following information:

A. Evaluation of the Attainment of the Output Objectives

Results of the evaluation of the attainment of all output objectives (test scores, pupil attendance, accreditation, and dropouts) for the previous year must be provided. The objectives must be listed along with the data indicating the degree to which the objective was met.

B. Evaluation of the Attainment of Other Objectives

Results of the evaluation of the attainment of all other objectives in the plan for the previous year must be provided. The objectives must be listed along with the data indicating the degree to which the objective was met. All objectives established in areas that were judged "below the state minimum" by the Quality Assessment Section of the State Department of Education *must* be addressed as priority items in the district plan.

C. Evaluation Process

The process used to evaluate the attainment of the objectives must be described. This must include the activities conducted to gather information and from whom information was collected.

D. Required Training Provided

A description of the training for school improvement council members is required as well as a summary of activities and programs involving parents and citizens. This section should report the activities for the previous school year.

E. Description of Dissemination of the Programmatic Report

Each district must provide a brief description of the process by which the district submitted its programmatic report to include the results of the required testing program and an evaluation of program effectiveness to the people of the district.

Annual District Staff Development Report

The format of the annual district staff development report shall be at the discretion of each local district.

The program for staff development should be designed to address the educational program needs identified in the annual school and district improvement reports. Staff development plans developed for the purpose of recertification of personnel do not necessarily meet the requirements of the ***Defined Minimum Program.*** Recertification plans which do not include all staff development requirements of the ***Defined Minimum Program*** are not acceptable as district staff development plans.

A. Enumeration of Guidelines Outlined in the *Defined Minimum Program for South Carolina School Districts*

1. A master plan for staff development must be developed on a district basis.
2. The program shall be continuous and go beyond the ten days of staff development required to receive state aid.
3. A description of the procedures used to determine staff development needs should be stated to include needs assessment activities, data sources, and the personnel utilized to develop the staff development program.
4. A detailed description of identified staff development needs should reflect an analysis of student and staff competencies and be categorized according to short- and long-

range priorities. School program needs such as curriculum development and instructional improvement should also be considered.

5. Objectives for both long-term and annual staff development needs should be specific, clearly stated and consistent with identified needs.
6. Activities and strategies which will enable the objectives to be met should be established to determine whether objectives have been achieved.
7. The educational personnel and/or schools participating in the staff development should be identified.
8. Accurate estimates required to conduct the staff development program should be stated in specific dollar amounts. If no funds are required to implement a particular staff development program, state that fact.
9. The annual plan must provide a calendar of specific dates and times for staff development activities. The calendar must reflect the number of clock hours allotted for each staff development activity.
10. A continuous and final evaluation plan with provisions for feedback from all levels of staff involvement should be included.
11. Activities should be planned for an entire district or school staff, by subject area and/or grade level, or on an individual basis.